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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a study of a desegregated Individually Guided Education (IGE) middle school which drew volunteers from throughout a large, midwestern city. Findings are based on participant observation and interviews by the author. The author concludes that the school failed to incorporate all the features of IGE, which calls for alterations in staffing so that staffs are more differentiated and more collegial than in traditional schools, the specification of learning objectives, and the grouping of students according to work needed on skill development rather than more traditional grouping practices. The author found that the IGE model helped the school succeed in minimizing disorder, creating positive relationships between students and teachers, fostering non-hostile and often friendly interracial relationships, and improving test scores. Other characteristics of the school were found to foster positive relationships including extracurricular activities, the "fresh and sweet" quality of the student body, the varied class background of students, and the muting of competition among students. (Author/MK)

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Sources of Climate in a Magnet School

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QUESTIONING THE CENTIPEDE:
Sources of Climate in a Magnet School*

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In the last decade, an increasing number of large city public school systems have tried establishing magnet schools intended to draw white and black children together on a voluntary basis. A few cities have set up large numbers of such schools, hoping to meet court orders for desegregation on a largely voluntary basis. Heartland, one of the twenty-five largest cities in the country, is one of these.[1] This paper analyzes the character of one such school in Heartland; it is a first report on a larger study of three of Heartland's magnet schools.

An understanding of magnet schools is important simply because they are a relatively new and unstudied phenomenon which has policy relevance. But magnet schools also provide ways to understand all schools, as they alter a few key variables which are usually constant in the makeup of schools and allow us to see the effect of their variance.

Parents and children are volunteers who choose the school and usually may withdraw from the school at their own initiative--without having to change their residence. Students come from many neighborhoods. They are diverse in neighborhood loyalities, in socio-economic status, and in race.

Magnets are also generally established around some special educational strategy or emphasis which distinguishes them from the majority of schools. Finally, they must by definition be established with some degree of publicity in the city as a whole in order to attract attention for voluntary enrollment from a broad geographical base.

The Adams Avenue Middle School is a magnet school with all of these characteristics. It draws its children from throughout the city of Heartland on a first come, first served, basis subject to racial quotas. The student population must be between 25% and 50% black.[2] Its special mode of education

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is IGE, Individually Guided Education, an innovative approach developed in detail at the University of Wisconsin and disseminated--more or less as a package--to schools throughout the country. I will describe the pattern in more detail below.

The literature on planned educational innovation has told a rather dreary tale of carefully polished models which become tarnished with the dross of daily life. Schools incorporate them into an ongoing social existence and in the end develop only some or even none of the structures and goals the plans hold up for them. (See for example, Gross et al., 1971; Charters, 1973; Sussmann, 1978; Gracey, 1972.) Adams Avenue similarly is far from a textbook example of IGE. But it is more to the point to study what Adams Avenue is, than what it is not. And from that perspective, Adams Avenue exhibits a remarkable degree of success as measured in the mundane but nonetheless important terms of good order and pleasant personal relationships and of interracial relations which sometimes go beyond neutral to positive. There is much more equivocal evidence that it also improves students' skills, especially in reading.

Adams undoubtedly gains some advantage in accomplishing these ends from elements of its magnet status. But its magnet status is by no means the only source of the character of the school. It is the intent of this paper to describe and analyze the school's character, looking at its special magnetic characteristics as some among many which blend together to create a whole which is more than the parts which compose it. It will be my argument that Adams's special character and its "success" are only partially the result of rational design. Some of the important sources of its character arise as unintended side effects of aspects of school structure or of policies designed for other purposes. Some of them come from the intuitive and in many cases unreflective acts of staff members. Like the centipede, the adults charged with running Adams's life orchestrate a complex and many faceted performance without knowing just how it is that they do it.

In the following pages I will describe first the methods used in my study of Adams, then the history and setting of the school, its special characteristics as a magnet, the nature of its "success", the variety of sources of that success, and some other distinctive characteristics of the school which result from the same sources as its success.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

I was present at Adams Avenue as a participant observer from January to June 1979; I was in the school an average of two to three days a week during that time. I followed each of three students through an entire day of classes, one in

each of Adams's "units". I also observed classes chosen to give me a broad sampling of teachers; thus I saw seventeen teachers in action beyond the classes in which I followed children. Altogether I saw twenty-three of the twenty-six teachers of the school in the classroom for at least one class hour, most for more. I interviewed twenty of the teachers in a semi-structured interview about the character both of classroom work and of the school as a whole. I followed the principal through two full school days, and I interviewed both her and the assistant principal. I also interviewed sixteen students in a sample stratified by grade level, race, gender, and ability. And I interviewed five parents ouside the school.

I spent time in the halls, cafeteria, girls' bathroom, staff lounge and playground observing the patterns and tone of interaction. I attended meetings of teachers in teams -- called units -- and of the faculty as a whole. I also was present at meetings of the student council, and the parent advisory committee, as well as at an open house and a coffee hour for prospective parents and a social evening for current ones. I perused documents such as handbooks for staff and students, weekly staff bulletins, a parent newsletter, curricular materials developed by various departments, and charts for recording children's progress. The data are thus qualitative in nature and filtered through the eyes of a single observer. But they are extensive.

THE SETTING AND HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL

Heartland is a conservative city, far from the rapid pace of the two coasts. Although its population is three quarters of a million, set in an urban area of over a million, it retains much of the character of smaller communities. It does so in part through the strength of its neighborhoods, at least some of which still retain the tight ethnic ties which characterized all until the Second World War. Its ethnic origins lie primarily in a few identifiable countries in northern and eastern Europe. Its black population has grown more slowly than that of many other major urban centers; currently blacks are approximately a quarter of the population. Because black children are more numerous than their parents -- and less often found in the city's many parochial schools than are their white counterparts -- they constitute approximately 45% of the public school population, fewer in the higher grades, more in the lower ones. Some studies have shown Heartland to be one of the nation's most segregated cities. Until a federal court order in 1976 mandated desegregation of the schools, the schools were clearly segregated.

However, Heartland's heavily industrial yet diverse economy has remained healthy and its city, county, and state services exceed the national average in quantity and quality.

Thus while the black population suffers clear discrimination, desperate poverty is not widespread, and interracial relations though tense are far from explosive.

The Adams Avenue building is located on the edge of downtown Heartland. It is a brick three story structure built as an elementary school before the turn of the twentieth century. With the evolution of the city it lost its neighborhood children and was used for a number of special programs. Its current history starts in 1972 when it was opened as Williams Annex, a school for seventh graders for whom there was no room at the crowded Williams Junior High in an economically depressed all black neighborhood.

It became Adams Avenue School once more, and a magnet, in the fall of 1976. When a federal court ruled for the plaintiffs in a suit for desegregation of the schools in January 1976, it gave the school system an opportunity to choose its own remedy. The plan the board proposed was designed to prevent mandatory reassignment of children. To that end it featured an array of "specialty" schools which offered distinctive kinds of education to volunteers willing to travel out of their neighborhoods.[3] Court approval of the overall design occurred in the late spring, and a number of these schools had to be opened in the fall to meet its quota of desegregation of one third of the schools by that time. Adams Avenue was one of the schools designed and implemented in the rush of that late spring and summer.

ADAM'S SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS AS A MAGNET SCHOOL

Because the Heartland system opened a large number of magnet schools, it has not for the most part given them lavish extra resources in staff and materials. What extra resources there are have come overwhelmingly from federal grants for systems with newly desegregated schools through Title VII and Title VI. Where there are large numbers of low income children, there are also resources from Title I, as there are in neighborhood schools with such children. Adams had two teachers funded by Title VII, one for a math lab and one for a reading lab, as well as a Title I specialist and a paraprofessional to help her. Because it has a small student body, 328, the resources of the principal and two thirds assistant principal and of the curriculum co-ordinator and counselor are stretched less thinly than in larger schools.

Title VII funds also were available in the school's second year of operation for the ordering of extra materials. Most departments made careful use of that opportunity and procured good stocks of materials appropriate to their program which still serve them, though they no longer can order more of such materials.

Adams's magnet status gave it one other advantage. In order to recruit for the specialty schools, the system generated much rhetoric about the special opportunities for choice to be given to parents and the fine new schools which were being created. Adams, along with the other magnets, thus had a positive image before it ever opened its doors as a specialty. Parents and children came with a sense of excitement and adventure. And they came having made an investment, with a stake in believing the best of the school. While this praise before the fact gave the staff a difficult image to live up to, it also provided them a kind of cushion of parental and student good will and belief in their efforts which gave them a grace period in which to develop the program which could actually deserve the publicity. Adams's first assistant principal, present for only a year, built upon this good will with a round of social events for parents which drew well over half the families and gave them a sense of community with each other and the school. These added to their high morale in a way which did not depend directly upon the instructional or social character of daily life within the school.

However, in the crucial areas of staff and students, specialties in Heartland are given little advantage. The school board and district administration wanted to pick staffs who would be sympathetic to, and skilled in, the particular special approach of each specialty school. But the powerful teachers' union stood strongly for assignment of teachers by application and seniority. Before the first year, the court stepped in and allowed the administration a free hand in filling a small proportion of the staff slots in specialties. In the spring of the first year, staffing of specialties was a major issue in a bitter strike, which resulted in a practical--though not a rhetorical--victory for the principle of seniority. At Adams Avenue the staff of Williams Annex had remained with no more than normal turnover.

It is a general principle of student recruitment in Heartland's specialties that all children may apply to each school, and where there is not room for all there will be random selection within categories of race and gender. At Adams, children come to the school from more than eighty elementary schools scattered all over the city. They bring with them a wide range of abilities and social backgrounds. However, they do have in common the alertness of their parents in signing them up for a program out of the neighborhood and their parents' willingness for them to travel--mostly by city bus--some distance from home to get to school. Whatever their economic background or academic ability, they are thus probably for the most part somewhat more enterprising than otherwise similar children and they come from families which care more than most about education.

There is one qualification to this picture. In the first years of desegregation, principals were urged to counsel with parents to inform them of their opportunities for choice and

to help them find placements best suited to their children -- especially those which would move children for desegregation. Since Heartland is in the process of transition from junior high schools to middle schools, principals of elementary schools, which contain the sixth grade, were naturally motivated to inform the parents of their most difficult children of the advantages of attendance at the sixth grade at Adams Avenue. Some of them did just that, and some of the parents took their advice.

Thus, while Adams does have some extra staff positions because of its magnet status, or at least its newly desegregated status, and it did receive some extra materials in the second year, it has neither a specially selected staff nor a specially selected student body.

Further, the speed with which the school was established caused serious problems of staff morale. The decision to transform the school was made during the summer while teachers were away. It was the principal who proposed the change and who sold the school to parents during August recruitment. The teachers learned of it along with the public and returned a week before school opened to expectations from the administration and parents that they would run a new, distinctive, and superior school. They received a week of inservice training, but it was in combination with elementary schools also starting IGE programs, and there was little attention to many patterns which are significantly different for middle schools. The teachers thus were thrown mostly on their own resources with little warning and few materials.. Not only did they have to teach in a new mode, which they understood but dimly, they also had to cope with an unfamiliar and highly diverse student body all of whom were strangers to them and to each other. Finally, they had to perform in a glare of attention from the media, from monitors appointed by the court, and from apprehensive parents, all of whom expected the school to live up to claims that it would be both distinctive and better than other schools.

Tension among the teachers was consequently very high the first year. Much of it settled around their relations with the principal. It was her duty to represent the school to the interested publics in the court, media, central office, and student families and her responsibility to see that the staff actually delivered the special IGE program which had been promised along with a pleasant and well integrated social atmosphere and good academic progress for each child. In exercising that responsibility she was sometimes curt with teachers both as a body in staff meetings and in individual contacts. And she wielded an unbending hierarchical form of control which many found inappropriate and insulting to their status.[4] At the end of the year, she gave three teachers administrative transfers on the grounds that they were not teaching in the specialty. Most of the teachers could not understand how she selected these three, since all were groping, and the act left a continuing sense that each might be next, even among

those genuinely trying to develop in the special mode of education. The consequence was effective in that it increased teachers' efforts to give at least the appearance of following the special educational mode, but ineffective in creating resentment and a sense of insecurity which were slow to heal.

Nonetheless, conditions among the staff improved as parents and children seemed to find the first year highly satisfactory and applications exceeded spaces for the second year. In that year also federally funded released time for the teachers to develop curriculum increased the sense of competence and familiarity with the specialty of a sizeable minority of the teachers. Materials arrived in abundance and public attention slackened off. Students and adults grew familiar with one another and with the program. By the third year of the program, the year of the study, the teachers began to feel that they and the school were hitting their stride and settling into a pattern. The principal also was more at ease, and while still hierarchical in her administrative style, was more supportive in her approach to the teachers.

Thus, the Adams Avenue Middle School was given some special advantages because of its magnet status--some extra staff positions and eventually some materials and a subtly more committed student and parent body. But it was also given extra burdens, mostly in the form of difficulties facing the staff in learning very rapidly and with little assistance how to teach a new specialty while under the gun of public inspection and administrative threat. Further the staff who were used to a student body which was homogeneous in race, social class and ability had to learn to deal with a highly heterogeneous student body in the same brief time.

THE CHARACTER OF ADAMS'S CLIMATE

At the time of the study, Adams Avenue enrolled three hundred twenty-eight students in the sixth through eighth grades. Of these, 48% were white, 44% black and 8% "other", a mixture of Hispanic and Native Americans. Though their backgrounds spanned a wide socio-economic range, 34% met the guidelines for eligibility for Title I, a proportion large enough to allow the school to participate in this program for the economically disadvantaged. The student body was thus weighted toward the lower end of the socio-economic scale, though it included substantial numbers of middle and upper middle class students as well.

That Adams's children were not a specially selected group of well scrubbed, obedient, and upwardly mobile teachers' favorites is perhaps indicated by some of their extra school activities and family background as discussed by teachers. In the course of the nine meetings of teaching teams which I observed, I heard, among other, of the following personal difficulties. A girl was just returning that day from the

Children's Home, while a boy had broken probation with a minor robbery and was in police custody. A father had just gone to jail, while a mother had deserted the family and the daughter's chronic tardiness was discovered to be the result of her responsibility to see younger siblings off to school. A boy had attempted (unsuccessfully) to pimp a girl classmate in a teacher's hearing while another had been selling nonexistent goods at a discount to his fellows. Several other children were affected by a serious family illness and other family problems which disrupted their financial or logistical situations enough to affect the child's routine in school. The teachers spoke of these incidents in a matter of fact way which indicated they were not unusual.[5]

Working with this clientele, Adams created a climate of good classroom and hall order which went beyond obedience to pleasant and relaxed personal relationships. And it created a climate where students of different races mixed without visible tension and sometimes chose one another voluntarily. Though the evidence on this point is scanty, it appears that Adams also improved students' test scores, at least in reading.

The reading resource teacher claimed that in-house tests showed dramatic reading gains, but he did not have complete figures at the time of our interview and later left the school without completing the report. I obtained from citywide data banks a comparison for the class who took citywide seventh grade tests in May 1979, of their fifth grade scores, measured just before they entered Adams, and their seventh grade scores. These show a gain of almost six percentile ranks in the class median and of almost four in the class mean on the total reading score. However, since an eighth of the class did not take the fifth grade test and almost a twelfth did not take the seventh grade test, it is difficult to interpret the meaning of these figures. On the total mathematics score, while fewer children scored at the very bottom of the scale in the seventh grade than the fifth, and more scored very high, the median score of the group went down six percentile ranks and the mean score slipped just under one percentile rank.

Adams had high attendance compared to other middle and junior high schools in the city. The official average for all of the preceding year was 87.5% compared to a city average of 82.2%. This figure is more striking because in the winter time travel by bus is cold and more time consuming, compared to a walk to local schools. The ratio of students present through the year to those enrolled in September, 95%, also exceeded the citywide average of 85%.

Adams gives few "yellow cards", formal referrals of a child to an administrator for discipline. Each of these must go into a child's record. At Adams in May after 165 days of school there had been 239, considerably less than one per child. Adams also gives few suspensions. Through May suspensions totaled less than one for every ten children. Adam's lack of

yellow cards and suspensions reflects in part a preference for informal discipline when problems do arise. But this informal discipline may be one of the reasons for the relatively small number of serious problems.

Adams's good order was striking to me in my first weeks at the school, as I entered with a background of fieldwork in desegregated junior high schools in two other communities. In both the halls and the classrooms adults and children behaved in a relaxed way with neither raucousness nor fiercely maintained quiet. Negative encounters between peers and between peers and adults were relatively few and resolved without dramatic attention. For example, I came fairly frequently upon a pair of children (usually but not always of the same race and sex) tussling behind the fire doors in the broad stairwells. They generally grinned sheepishly and separated, from what appeared to be a playful wrestling. Sometimes one might call out, "Teacher! He's got my pencil! (She's got my comb!)" But these appeared to be games that went awry from the point of view of one participant, not angry encounters. In the classroom, teachers sometimes lost patience with inactivity or distraction on the part of some students and spoke to them in raised voices. But their comments assailed the activity, not the person. They had the desired effect for the moment at least, and the business of the class continued. Conflicts did not draw upon a reservoir of accumulated tension to become dramatic social events or continuing feuds.

Thus while Adams's students were not sweetly obedient angels who never angered one another or their teachers, the general tone of both peer and student-teacher relationships was positive. Teachers chatted with students before class about school events, activities at home and the accomplishments of sports teams. They joked with them and the students replied in kind. In these contexts especially older children sometimes addressed male teachers by their last name alone, as "Hey, Nemlaha, what are we going to do today?", in a way which was intimate, yet not disrespectful. "Nemlaha" would straightforwardly name the day's activity in response. Teachers frequently used humor when telling children to stop with a distraction, or to get going on an assignment. Similarly, students were enough at ease to use the open door which both principals maintained to tell them of trouble among peers in the school at large before it reached a point where formal discipline was necessary.

There were a number of practices which symbolized the relationship between students and teachers. Students who needed materials or information at lunchtime knocked on the door of the teachers' lounge on a regular basis, perhaps once or twice a day, and were courteously received into the lounge and given what they needed. Teachers lent students their keys to get materials even when they were not directly supervising the locked area. After school some students liked to stay to play basketball on the playground. The school's balls were

regularly returned to the office, whether an adult supervised their return or not.

However, this positive tone of relationships was not universal in the school. I observed five adults on several occasions in full blown angry confrontations with students. Adult and student alike demonstrated genuine hostility. These five exceptions underscore the fact that Adams's generally smooth relations were not an inevitable consequence of either its structure or its population. Rather they were a result of the character of the school. The five exceptions help to indicate where that character lay; I will say more of them below.

In relations across racial lines, students were similarly something short of paragons, but a good deal more positively inclined than many similar children in other schools. No teacher spoke of having difficulty in getting children of different races to work together in the classroom. When asked about their more voluntary social relations a few teachers said that one or two of their groups had trouble between children of different races.[6]

In the dining room and on the playground where children chose their companions, some groups were all white, some all black, some mostly of one race with just one or two of another and some thoroughly mixed. One person who supervised lunchtime play for the seventh grade every day described their play patterns outdoors in the spring as follows:

> "Every day you'd see one basketball game that has almost all white and Latin kids playing. You'd see another basketball game with all black kids. But boys and girls mixed. Then you'd see another game--that's the biggest game out there--that has white and black kids playing in it. That's the full court game.
>
> And you'd see a jump rope game that has almost always all black girls in it. Then you'd see a keep away game that would be maybe 70% white and 30% black. Then you'd see a bunch of kids standing around and talking that would be mixed racially."

This general pattern was consistent with my less extensive observation of all three lunch hours.

The following incident catches the tone of interaction in the school around issues both of discipline and of interracial relations.

> "[In a unit meeting,] Mr. Stolz said that he had heard his first racial slur this morning, the first in two years. He recounted the incident with a light tone. He had looked up to see Slim (apparently a

black boy) and George Herbst (apparently white) square off at each other. Slim said, "What did you say?!" Then he just ran out of words and socked George, leaving a big red welt. Mr. Stolz sat both boys down and asked them what that was all about. Slim said George had called him a nigger. Mr. Stolz asked George if that were true and he said it was. Mr. Stolz told George he guessed he had gotten what he was asking for, and turned his attention back to the rest of the class. After class, he stopped both boys to follow up, but by then they had settled the matter themselves. Slim said George had apologized and they both said they were on OK terms again. So he let them go."

"Juvenile justice", commented Mrs. Schumann.

In the late spring I interviewed sixteen students chosen with quotas for grade level, ability, race, and sex.[7] Of these sixteen students all but two claimed to have good friends of a different race from themselves. Some made the claim more credible by spontaneously naming the friend(s). All but two preferred racial diversity when asked whether they would prefer their next school to be mainly of their own race or mixed half and half.[8]

The students I interviewed expressed a contentment with the school overall which surprised me even after several months of experience in its halls and classrooms. Many positively glowed as they described it. Asked what they would change if given magical powers to change anything they liked, a few changed nothing, and most of the rest changed some aspect of the physical facility, most often the small playground.

SOURCES OF ADAMS'S CLIMATE

Structural Sources: Size, Architecture, Site

While Adams's good order and cordial personal relationships are hardly unique, they are nonetheless not the rule in schools for children this age. It is thus worthwhile trying to discover their sources. The source which was most evident to the staff was the size of the school. They named it repeatedly as a crucial ingredient in the character of the school.

Size. Because the school contained only 328 children, it was possible for the principals to know just about every child by face if not by name. And because the school was broken up into three "units" of students, each of whom was housed on a separate floor, teachers knew all the children who belonged on their floor. And teachers of younger children knew almost every child in the school. Children knew each other. Thus disaffected

children had difficulty wandering the halls without being sent back to class, and no one could use the cover of anonymity as protection for predatory acts against persons or property. But perhaps more important, all the children enjoyed the security of looking about them at familiar faces of persons they knew as individuals with names. Teachers also could address children more appropriately when they needed to correct them, if they knew something about them and thus could tailor their response to the child.

Architecture. The Adams School was designed as an elementary school. While this fact created problems for the school in the lack of its own gymnasium (facilities a block away were rented) and inadequate spaces for subjects such as art, music, and home economics, it had some accompanying advantages. First, the building has a more inviting ambience than most junior high buildings. Its wooden floors and brightly painted walls are less institutional. More important, on each floor four to six rooms open onto a wide hall in which there is ample room for children to move yet too little space to cause the echo chamber effect created by long tile and plaster corridors. Problems of traffic and collective excitement are avoided. The three floors also give each unit of children their own territory. And because there are no bells and each unit moves between classes at a different time, there are also no huge crowds in motion at once.

The architecture has an unintended side effect in combination with size. The space is so small that specialist teachers must perch at desks in rooms used for several purposes. Regular classrooms are often in use during teachers' preparation periods. Children use them for indoor recreation on cold and rainy days. This crowding, while certainly inconvenient, has the advantage of pushing teachers out of their classrooms and forcing them to become acquainted with each other. Further, because classrooms are generally not available and there is only one place--the lounge--for teachers to talk or smoke, they must socialize with a broad group. The crowding thus discourages factions.

The small size, improvised facilities, and obviously elderly character of the building make it appear inadequate to visitors or persons arriving for the first time. But only two teachers, one of them new, complained seriously about the building or the crowding they suffered. The advantages of a small program and the building's atmosphere outweigh its inconveniences. Students considered the rented gym facilities an advantage of the school, but several named the small playground as their least favorite aspect of it.

Site. Adams is located in a truly downtown area. Students and staff all arrive on wheels and there is no watching neighborhood aside from the owners of nearby small businesses. The

school is therefore located on neutral territory, on no one's turf. Adults on the streets are racially and socially diverse, and the area is accessible to all the students' parents. There are no local high school students to watch the students or provide models for them, and none lounging truant to enter the school looking for entertainment.

The site also allows classes to walk to the central library or an excellent museum of social studies and technology and return within one or two class periods. Field trips to other downtown activities--such as businesses and stage performances--can easily be done on foot or with short city bus rides using passes students already possess. The school makes fairly frequent use of these facilities and they are one of its attractions, especially for families of higher ability students.

Citywide Enrollment. Adams's site is easy to reach by city bus from most of the city. It thus facilitates the school's capacity to draw from many different elementary schools. The number of schools represented hovers between eighty and ninety which means that there are an average of four or less students from any one school. Those four may be scattered in different grades. All but a few children therefore enter the school without the preformed peer groups which often come to middle school or junior high school together. The fact that most children enter without elementary school or neighborhood associates, and that their school life is separate from their continuing neighborhood friendships allows them to engage in activities those associations would discourage. Thus, they are freer to make friends across racial lines, if the student culture of the school allows it, even if their earlier one race peers would not approve. And if they live in neighborhoods where large numbers of children are alienated from school, they do not have to justify their co-operation with Adams before those peers.

Planned Sources of Climate: The Multi-Unit IGE Approach

The school's special educational mode includes a plan where students are separated into units of approximately 110 students who share a common group of teachers of four academic subjects. All of the students have these four teachers and these four teachers have all of the students and only those students. While in the IGE design these groups are often multi-age, Adams preferred to have them homogeneous in grade because of different curricula for different ages in social studies and science mandated for all schools by the district. All but the youngest unit, which included some seventh as well as sixth graders, were thus synonymous with a single grade.

The daily schedule of the school separates these units. They change classes at different times and have lunch and recreation at different times. Consequently, the effective size of the school for children is closer to 110 than to 330. They can know most of the children they encounter quite well. Also, though no one in the school commented upon this fact, younger and older children are separated. The younger are shielded from the strains and the challenges of interacting with older children, except on an occasional basis.

The four teachers of the unit are given a free hour a day, in addition to their regular preparation period, for common planning. They are thus a team in some sense, although at Adams they maintain strictly separate classrooms. But they do plan common curricular themes and outside speakers or field trips together. And they do accomodate their schedules to group projects or others' individual projects.

They also discuss individual children and their progress, needs, and problems. These discussions helped teachers to develop consistent rules and rule enforcement at least within units. And to a degree they developed similar strategies for coping with individuals having difficulties. The discussions also served as a control device over children who enjoyed teasing teachers with weak control. They had to answer to all their teachers for at least their more serious breaches of classroom etiquette with any one.

Such a structure is a two-edged sword however. It can easily operate to spread the anger of one teacher toward a child among all his teachers. And it can re-enforce hostility or despair as well as offer varied insight and refreshing support. While each unit at Adams developed its own distinctive style, and they varied in their degree of constructive operation, none turned primarily negative.

The plan for Multi-Unit IGE in its academic form includes alterations in staffing so that staffs are both more differentiated and more collegial than in traditional schools (Klausmeier, 1977). Adams developed few of these patterns in more than name. The faculty remained a group of peers and the principal ran the school from the top down. Paraprofessional aids assigned to each unit worked with variable effectiveness. (The central office left one of these positions unfilled after a resignation for the whole course of the second semester.) Those few teachers who knew from prior experience in IGE elementary schools in the system about the staff co-operation and differentiation expected in the formal IGE design were sometimes restless, especially with the hierarchical character of relations between the teachers and the principal. But many of Adams's teachers appeared unaware that the formal IGE design envisioned such structural changes.

For Adams's staff, the heart of IGE clearly lay in classroom practice. They defined IGE consistently in terms of two elements. The first was the specification of learning objectives, together with tests of children's skills before and after teaching each objective and careful charts of each child's progress on each objective. The second was grouping children according to the work each group needed to do on the skill currently being worked upon. (The name individually guided education, they agreed, is misleading.) Some teachers defined IGE in terms of only one of these elements. Very few went beyond the pair.

Some teachers followed the IGE pattern in detail and found it both a challenge to their talents and helpful in working with a diverse clientele. Others worked with it in a fairly loose way, specifying broad objectives and doing some general testing. Yet others paid it only lip service. Because the principal left no doubt that she wanted every teacher to follow it scrupulously, those who did not do so put some effort into maintaining an appearance of so doing. Allowing for this variation, it seems fair to say that on the whole the teachers became more oriented to the teaching of specific skills, and more self-conscious about concrete goals for each day and each unit of study and each year than each had previously been. Thus as a group they were probably better prepared for classes and more planful and self-conscious in encouraging children's skill development than the same individuals would have been without a context of IGE. Further this planfulness and purposefulness probably improved their skills of classroom management, making the class hours run a little more smoothly. In these ways then, IGE made a direct contribution to the children's learning, even though all the teachers did not carry out its mandates literally.

IGE also had some less direct effects. First, it breaks up the social definition of "third grade work" or "seventh grade work" as a reality which should correspond to each child's agenda. It assumes that children have a variety of skills, even though all are in one classroom, and it enjoins the teacher to be systematic in discovering each child's skill level and in seeing that he or she progresses from there to a higher one. Breaking the set that "sixth grade work" is a distinctly identifiable entity, encourages the teacher to challenge the sixth grader who has mastered ordinary sixth grade work already. Perhaps more important, it lifts some of the stigma from both student and teacher if a sixth grader's tests show he needs work on what might elsewhere be defined as fourth grade work. If posttesting shows clear progress in his skills even though they are still below his official grade level, he and the teacher can also see solid evidence of fruits from their labors together, and feel that they have accomplished something worth-while. The posttest and progress marked on the child's skills chart document this progress in an "official" way. This sense of accomplishment in itself is likely to decrease students' motivations for

hostility or distraction in the classroom and increase their motivation for academic effort. It also is likely to make teachers treat their students in a more kindly way and put more effort into helping them in their academic efforts.

Second, Adams adopted a report card, modeled in large part after those of other IGE schools, which reflects an acceptance of the varied skill levels at which children in a single grade may be working. It underscores their efforts more than their accomplishments. Thus, instead of the traditional A, B, or C, a student receives a number which indicates the level where he is working in a given subject and then an I, G, or E which indicates how well he is working at that level. Superior effort earns an I, average effort a G, and inadequate effort an E. Thus a sixth grader with fourth grade skills who was working at his full capacity might earn an I, while another sixth grader with eighth grade skills who was lackadaisical in his efforts might earn a G or even an E. Because the honor roll was composed of children with more than a certain number of Is, children with weak skills who worked hard might make it, while talented but indifferent children were excluded. This system provided incentive to the poorer achievers in the school. Even if they were behind the rest of the class, they could earn rewards for academic efforts. Some teachers were enthusiastic about the effects of this carrot on weaker students; others thought it made little difference. The latter group especially doubted the effectiveness of the stick applied to bright but sporadic workers.

Thus, though all the teachers in the school may not have faithfully followed the IGE blueprint, the general IGE design had an important impact on the school in legitimating the efforts of children and teachers at many different levels in a single classroom. It also had an important impact in rewarding conscientious effort and demonstrable progress, rather than absolute levels of accomplishment. This effect was especially important in a school with a population like Adams's where children with diverse social and school backgrounds came together at the sixth grade. Their diverse experiences, mostly in racially and economically segregated neighborhood schools, compounded individual differences to create large academic differences among them. By making differences in skill level an expected part of the academic operation, and defining success as improvement in each child's skills between the pretest and posttest, IGE went far to equalize the children's social standing. It also worked to bolster the teachers' patience and their own self-esteem in working with children with lower skills.

Unplanned Effects of Classroom Instruction

A further muting of the visibility of academic differences among children flowed from the organization of the classrooms. Because Adams was one of the specialty schools which formed the showpieces of the desegregation plan, it drew a lot of attention from the court and the black community which were concerned that resegregation not occur within its walls. The first year the school received several visits from the monitoring board appointed by the court, which held just such concerns. The principal liked to quote a high appointee of the court to the effect that academic tracking, with its segregating effects, is illegal. She therefore insisted that classes be composed of academically heterogeneous students. The grouping of children on the basis of skills demonstrated on pretests was thus to be done within each classroom, not by sorting children into different rooms.[10]

Teachers had to devise systems of working effectively with classes of children whose abilities and skills were widely divergent.[11] Further, the expectation in IGE for grouping according to skill suggested breaking the classes down into small groups. Indeed the principal expected teachers to have such groups; so that virtually all teachers presented at least an appearance of such grouping, though the differentiation of tasks given to the groups was variable.

Since there was ordinarily only one adult in the room and students were to some degree working on a variety of tasks, they had to spend much of their time working independently of both the teacher and each other. Thus it was rare to see a teacher talk to a whole class for more than a few minutes. It was even rarer for students to discuss or even answer questions except in small groups. Within groups the most common pattern of activity was a brief explanation from the teacher followed by interaction between the teacher and individuals as he or she moved around assisting, assessing, and answering questions. The rest of the class would be working at their desks.

This pattern of activity evolved as a solution to the problem of working with diverse levels of skill and diverse tasks in a single room. But it had far reaching effects which were not consciously designed. First, in the words of one administrator, it allowed students to "let off steam at their own pace." It enabled them to move on and off task without attracting attention or disturbing their neighbors. Thus a child could stop and doodle, sharpen his pencil, or make an irrelevant comment to his neighbor, without missing crucial information or disturbing any one but the neighbor who listened to him. Thus one source of teacher-student confrontations in classrooms where oral interchange among the whole class dominates was avoided.

Second, and perhaps more important, this pattern of activity kept a student's skill level relatively private. He was virtually never called upon to read aloud or solve a math problem in front of the whole class. And even in small groups of children with similar abilities, these occasions were not common. The private character of performance saved the student with low skills from the acute embarrassment of putting his skills on public display. Teachers did not comment on this aspect of their interaction with students, but the assistant principal, charged with the task of discipline, stated it very explicitly in comparing Adams with other schools where he had worked which included two where large numbers of students had low skills:

> A kid gets kicked out of class. Why did he get kicked out of class? I can tell when a kid comes in here if he had something to do with getting kicked our of class. I mean like almost the subconscious motivation to get out of there. And when a kid comes in like that he's not really upset. He's not real intense like he's going to fight with somebody. But now all of a sudden he almost looks relaxed, like he feels safe. He feels safer now. He's not as apprehensive now as he probably was in the room. Then I have to wonder, you know, why did he do this? Were they calling around?
>
> I've seen it. They've gone around the room calling on kids. And two calls before so and so, he just starts making jokes or hitting the girl next to him. Because it's far more acceptable among his peers to be kicked out of the room for being a clown, or sticking his hat on for the third time, than to stumble through reading out loud in front of twenty-nine other people.
>
> Now, that should not be happening here. So it's not something that I have to concern myself with in trying to figure out where the kid's at.[12]

There is considerable literature on the effect of activity patterns in workplaces on the social relationships and self-concepts of adults (Blauner, 1964; Gouldner, 1954; Homans, 1950; Sayles, 1958). But only a few authors have paid attention to the effects of different activity structures in classrooms. Bossert's (1979) recent work is the most thorough treatment of the issue. He compared third and fourth grade classes dominated by different activity structures. He found differences in the teachers' behavior which held across individuals and even within the behavior of the same individual as they followed what was for each a dominant or minor pattern of activity. Recitation which involved the whole class, when compared with varied tasks which split the class, required the teacher to give swifter, more impersonal, and more standardized responses to children's distracting behavior in the interests of maintaining

the interest of the rest of the group and their belief in the fairness of the teacher's treatment. Recitation also developed a visible hierarchy of skills in the class. Teachers tended to give more time to strong students who could serve as models for the rest of the class. Peer relations were also affected. In the classrooms dominated by recitation, students formed friendships based on their location in the visible skill hierarchy. These friendships were stable through the year, and students looked for activities they could engage in with friends. In the rooms dominated by varied tasks, students formed friendships across ability levels on the basis of common interests. The friendship ties were more fluid, varying as the children's interests changed.

If Bossert's findings can be generalized to older children, it is possible to suggest that the activity structure of Adams's classes did more than save restless children from scolding or low skilled ones from the need to create diversions. It also allowed teachers to approach children in more individualized and personal ways. (Bossert's children found the multi-task teachers warmer though he could see no difference as they talked <u>about</u> children to another adult.) And it encouraged ties among peers which were more fluid and inclusive--thus indirectly encouraging interrracial ties, or at least doing away with some barriers to them.

The effect of seatwork in removing situations which would cause students to tease or defy a teacher was important as it started a cumulative cycle. The students who might otherwise engage in such activities were under less tension and thus less ready to disrupt others' work and to anger the teacher as well as more ready to do their own work. The rest of the class was, therefore, less often distracted and more able to get on with their own work, thus performing better, and giving themselves and the teacher more of a sense of positive accomplishment.[13] The teacher had fewer angry or distracting outbursts to manage and thus was left in a kindlier mood and with more emotional and intellectual resources available for the task of cognitive teaching. The teacher's positive mood and steady attention to the academic task indicated respect for the students and a belief that every one could learn, characteristics which encouraged the students to be co-operative and diligent. Their response in turn made the teacher's work more rewarding, and so on. The structure of seatwork was thus an important element in a more complex mutually re-enforcing cycle of interaction between the students, both individually and collectively, and the teacher.

However, while this cycle removed many of the impediments to constructive academic work that come with disorder, especially where students skills are low, it did not generate a positive desire to work where it was not already present. Thus, the students who caused Adams's teachers the most concern were those who simply did not do a large portion of their assigned work.

Unless the teacher stayed physically close to such students, it was difficult to monitor and sanction their performance. The pattern of seatwork also was involved in creating some of the school's more problematic characteristics which I will discuss below.

Faculty Culture as A Source of Climate

There is a considerable body of literature which suggests that persons in work places develop shared definitions of reality, along with values and norms which shape their behavior significantly. These shared understandings can be called a culture. Further, this literature indicates, that, like cultures in broader societies, cultures in work places are intimately connected to social structure. (See for example Homans, 1950: Blau, 1963; Blauner, 1964; Crozier, 1964.)

The faculty at Adams did develop a culture. They shared perceptions which they did not question--or even perceive as socially shared understandings which might not be common elsewhere. And these socially shared understandings were related to the structural conditions of their common life. The existence of this common culture shaped the behavior of individuals. Like any culture it was more than the sum of individual attitudes and so could be said to affect events in and of itself.

The most striking feature of Adams's faculty culture was the assumption that relations among persons who know each other will be positively toned. Related to that belief was a fairly benign view of human nature which led teachers to expect at least some good in any one. Thus, when I questioned them about the distinctiveness of some positive event or about its sources, they tended to be puzzled by the question. For example, when I remarked upon the students' polite reception of a student organized talent show in which the acts ranged from dreadful to very good and from expression of a distinctively white taste in music and movement to a distinctively black one, they found the event unremarkable. They said simply that it was hardly surprising that the students received these acts in a friendly way since they know one another.

As teachers discussed their own relations with the children, they attributed the positive tone of relationships to the fact that there are few enough children for them to know them personally. They assumed the units would operate to re-enforce positive attitudes toward students. It was only the assistant principal who was participating simultaneously in another school who pointed out that units could equally as well operate to re-enforce negative attitudes. Thus, it was a cultural belief among the Adams teachers that greater acquaintance with students, and greater discussion of them, leads to increasingly positive interaction. The strength of that cultural belief becomes even more evident when we remember that Adams attracts some significant minority of students who have had serious problems at other

schools. Other teachers have not found that to know these children was to love them--or else they have not been able to know them.[14]

The faculty culture was supported by the active encouragement of several individuals who threw positive comments into group conversations that started to turn negative. It is difficult to know how consciously they did this; it was done so casually that only some one considering the tone of interaction would be likely to notice it as a pattern.[15]

The unity and force of faculty culture relied in part upon structural conditions. Not only did the crowding of the building throw teachers together in the teachers' lounge, which served also as their lunchroom, but the shape and furniture of that room discouraged private conversations which could have nurtured factions with alternative views of reality. Further, there seemed to be an unwritten rule that conversations in the lounge ought to be of a kind which all could share.

The process of continual maintenance and renewal of shared cultural definitions becomes most visible when newcomers arrive who must be socialized into the assumptions that others already have in common. Such persons not only are ignorant of what others "know;" they are also a threat to the self-evident character of the reality others have constructed. Through deviant acts born of ignorance they can alter relationships which depend upon that reality. The character of faculty culture was made explicit in this way one day at Adams when a teacher who had entered the school in March was complaining about the slow rate at which a well known difficult student had worked in producing his product for a class project she had displayed for the school's admiration. Just at that moment, that very student knocked and came in with a request for a teacher. The group, who had been joking about this student's lack of application, displayed no embarrassment or hesitation. Immediately one teacher gave the student a compliment upon the finished product and others followed in like manner. The responsible teacher started to say she had been telling them how long it took, but one of the informal leaders of the faculty turned her back on the student and effectively signaled the newcomer to quiet. After the student left, the informal leader covered over the rather stern sanction with another joke about the student's slow rate of progress. Here, the faculty as a body displayed their quick sense for building students up--whatever their estimation of their comparative ability. The group processes of re-enforcing the positive in approaching students were brought out in the open by a newcomer who violated common understandings.

There had been deep rifts in the faculty between those who joined and did not join the strike in the first year of Adams's existence as a magnet. A few teachers who had come to the school the following year made some conscious efforts to

heal those rifts, and others joined less consciously. Again the lounge became a locus for some of this activity. During the lunch hour there were always card games afoot which cut across all the obvious structural lines in the faculty. They included male and female, black and white, teacher and aid, academic and special interest (art, home economics etc.) teacher. The unwritten rule against private conversations in the lounge also bridged these gaps. Again, the cultural character of these practices was dramatized by an uncomprehending newcomer. She had been told by her unit leader, who was one of the conscious healers of the rifts, that she should mix with other teachers and be sociable in the lounge. She usually brought work with her to lunch, and commented upon this suggestion in her research interview with a mild sense of outrage. She declared she had no time for such trivialities. She was oblivious to their effect on the total tone of the school.

The positive tone in which teachers spoke about students as well as to them extended to an acceptance of children of different races. None of the children mentioned racial discrimination by teachers in their interviews.[16] Those black teachers whom I asked about this issue did not see significant problems. In unit meetings and in the lounge I was consistently unable to tell the race of children whose names were brought up for discussion. The working groups in classrooms were fairly well mixed by race, though the slowest and fastest might have only one race. Some teachers mentioned making a conscious effort to see at least that the fastest was not all white by including and supporting the most able black children in the class.

These positive racial attitudes were supported by some structural conditions. Each of the units had an integrated staff so that some one was present who might be able to interpret the experience of both white and black children.[17] I never heard such interpretations made in a self-conscious way, but I did hear teachers speak for children's perspectives in ways that it seemed to me would come most easily from an adult of the same race. The presence of both majority and minority teachers also inhibited expression of whatever blatant prejudices individual teachers may privately have held. Gatherings in the teachers' lounge at almost any hour were similarly desegregated, since 31% of the teaching and administrative staff were black and a majority of the aids--who also used the lounge--were black.

The history and social compostion of the school probably also contributed to teachers' racial attitudes. The faculty had moved from an all black, low income student body to a more diverse one. That diversity included both middle class black children with good skills and lower class white children with low skills. When I could identify the race of individuals who were discussed as problems, they were about equally often black and white. Williams Annex had shared many of the structural advantages of Adams Avenue, and the teachers had felt reasonably

successful in that context. Thus, they did not find the black children unfamiliar or think of them as strangers who changed the school. Indeed if there was a group toward which the faculty sometimes expressed negative feelings only partly based on behavior, it was high achieving, high status white children who together with their parents expected the school to meet their special needs. They were the unfamiliar "invaders" in this situation.

Finally, the IGE approach requires more work of the faculty than traditional teaching. Teachers agreed about the added load, whether they approved of it or not. Thus the faculty had to be willing to put in extra hours for the sake of the school's special program. But many also went beyond this. There was a large array of activities for children in addition to those of the regular school day. The physical education teachers ran after school intramurals in several sports. There was a photography club which made little homemade cameras, used them, and developed the film. A camping club made week end outings, and a ten day trip to Canada after school closed had become a tradition. The Spanish teacher had taken a group to Mexico the year before. Both leaders of long trips helped students raise money. The special interest teachers co-operated in working with students over three months to put on a forty-five minute musical play for which students made costumes and sets with teachers' help.

The teachers of special interest subjects were the most involved in this kind of activity--for some of which they received extra pay and for some of which they did not. The faculty as a whole supported these efforts with questions about how plans and activities were coming along and willingness to excuse students from classes where necessary for participation or planning.

The importance of faculty culture as a support for positive relations among students and faculty and among the faculty themselves became particularly evident where its influence failed. I have already mentioned that I saw five teachers in angry confrontations with students on more than one occasion. Of the five, three had been in the school two years or less; two had not yet served a full year. Two were among eight teachers who were rarely present in the lounge. Two others were marginal participants in interaction there. They were thus less subject to the influence of faculty culture than were most others. The fifth teacher was in chronic pain, an individual condition likely to shorten any one's usual patience. The other four teachers, but not this one, were more hostile toward students in talking about them as well as to them, than were most other teachers.

Two of the five teachers attempted more large group recitation kinds of activities than most teachers did. And all, when students were working at seatwork either carried on group instruction with smaller groups or stationed themselves at their

desks (or talking to an observer) rather than circulating through the class as did most of their colleagues. They thus did not have the opportunities to become personally involved with their students which many of their colleagues did. It is difficult therefore to know how much their isolation from faculty culture was a causal element in their relationship to children rather than a result of their poorer relations with children leading them to feel marginal to the faculty group.

The angry response of the students to these five adults also indicates that each teacher at Adams benefited from the good relationships established by other teachers. As children left one class to go to another, they did not greet the new teacher with a scowl left from their recent experience. The resources required to maintain twenty-five good moods are considerably less than those required to construct them in children who come in the door tense and angry. Thus each teacher's positive relationships with children built upon those of other teachers. Given this boost, it was easier for each teacher to send his students to the next class in the same good frame of mind he had gotten them. Thus, the semi-conscious maintenance of a positive attitude toward both one another and the children among the faculty as a group was a social action which benefited each individual's classroom relationships. If either the faculty culture or individual classroom relationships broke down, the other would be threatened in a spiral reversed from the positive one that now exists. Attention to the classroom problems that did arise suggests that only a few of Adams's faculty would have had the purely personal resources to maintain such good relationships with students who were under more severe tension and strain in the total school than were Adams's.

The Principals as a Source of Climate

Adams's principal and part time assistant principal played an important part in setting and maintaining the tone of the school. Both made careful efforts to consider children's points of view around issues of conflict. And both maintained a calm and relaxed manner in interaction with students which set a tone for the rest of the school. Both took the trouble to get to know as many children as possible. Both left their doors both literally and figuratively open. Students did actually take advantage of this invitation to drop in to see them on a wide variety of matters of the students' choosing.

Aside from these matters, the principals operated rather separately with the assistant principal having major responsibility for discipline and supervision as well as some routine tasks such as registrations and report cards. Nonetheless, their different personal styles and program emphases complemented each other to make a team stronger than each alone.

The principal is a black woman with a background in secondary teaching and counseling in inner city schools. As "administrator in charge" of Williams Annex, she proposed and supported the development of the Adams Avenue specialty program. And she bore formal responsibility and accountability for its success or failure in the eyes of her superiors in the central administration.

Several of her policies and practices were important to the character of the school. First, I have already mentioned that she pushed the teachers hard to follow the classroom patterns of IGE as the school - that is, she herself, - defined them. And she obtained at least superficial compliance from all and thoroughgoing engagement from a few. Second, it was at her insistence that ability grouping is done within rather than between classrooms. Though she cites the pressures of the court and the law, she is by no means ill-pleased with the resulting pattern. Third, while she believes in the kind of basic, skill oriented education to which the IGE approach is appropriate, she also strongly argues that children need activities which break up the daily routine and make school an attractive place. She is unapologetic in arguing for some activities which are simply fun, a reward for coming to school to do the less engaging academic work. Accordingly she plans and has the teachers plan a broad spectrum of activities beyond the regular curriculum--in addition to giving strong support to the extracurricular activities already mentioned.

She promoted a week of study of the history and artistic expression of Afro-Americans and another of the culture of each of four European countries from which many residents of Heartland come. She sponsored a Fifties dress up day and a week of death education which included films and speakers. She required unit teachers to organize common themes of study for each unit which could be academic, practical or socio-emotional in nature. Examples are astronomy, transportation, and "Who am I?". These common themes of study required the teachers to co-operate some on academic content, to become aware of one another's interests, and to accomodate their scheduling to one another's needs. They thus provided vehicles for pulling the units, and sometimes the whole faculty, into active co-operation rather than peaceful co-existence.

Fourth, the principal was very much concerned with the students' personal well being. She believes that a child needs a positive self-image to learn, and she saw it as part of the school's mission to foster such a positive self-image. She made it her business to be well acquainted with students in the school who had academic or social difficulties, and she tried to be supportive to them.

Fifth, she de-emphasized issues of race. A child was primarily a child, and only secondarily of one race or another. While she did think it important for children to have some

knowledge of each other's ethnic heritage, she dealt with this topic in terms of the group's history, foods, and artistic expression. She saw to it that there were programs in the school which dealt with these matters not only for black children but for children of Native American and European origins as well. But she put no emphasis at all upon differences of outlook that might arise from the social and racial background of children in the classroom.[18]

If the principal was oriented to individuals and their emotional needs, the assistant principal was oriented to careful planning and organization. He developed a list of spots in the school where trouble could brew at each hour of the day, and after sensing the student mood early in the morning, saw that an adult was there on an uneasy day. He worked out clear logistical systems for supervision by the aids, and experimented with plans for recreation when the weather changed, then settled on what seemed the most effective. He kept careful records of every encounter with a child in his office and referred to them when making disciplinary decisions. He was equally systematic in hearing out both parties to a disagreement, and writing down their versions of events. His approach to discipline helped to give students a sense that the school as a whole was run on a fair and evenhanded basis.

The assistant principal's organized care for routines of supervision and special surveillance of trouble spots as needed eliminated some of the sources of disorder in the school as a whole before they had time to kindle confrontations which would add tension to the total atmosphere. The principal's personal concern for students and her emphasis upon making the school a place where students could have some fun and where they felt personally valued provided a positive warmth within this framework of order which helped students to relax and feel accepted.

ADAMS'S DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER

Adams developed distinctive characteristics beyond its improvement of test scores, good order, and hospitable interracial relations. The faculty as a body were led by the IGE model and its emphasis upon the acquisition of skills to concentrate upon the formal curriculum and upon formal skill development. The teachers of subjects like art and home economics which were less skill-oriented differed somewhat in this respect, and it was they who carried the majority of the school's extracurricular activities and special events. Still, in this faculty, especially among the academic teachers, there was little discussion of, or visible attention to, other ends of education such as the building of character (beyond improving manners), the development of independence or the nurturing of curiosity.

The students developed some common characteristics which are harder to measure than those I have discussed so far, yet which seemed quite evident to an outsider observing classes and talking with students in interviews. Students were marked by a continued childlike character even through the eighth grade, when students in many schools have moved into adolescent patterns. Adams's students approached the research interview with diffidence but not with fear. They expected to answer the adult's question and wait for the next, not to expand or elaborate upon their own perspective on the school. Their style of interaction was direct and trusting. Their comments were positive and unreflective. When asked at the end of the interview what they would change about the school, their wishes were concrete and simple, most of them concerned with improving physical facilities. They maintained a kind of freshness, and even sweetness, of style but they were also naive and uncritical.

The fresh and sweet quality of the students was perhaps most striking when it lent an aura to the interactional style of children I knew to be reasonably streetwise products of rough neighborhoods. They could have simply learned the cultural style of the school and assumed it where it seemed appropriate to others' desires. But it is also possible that the school provided them an island in their lives where they could return to an attitude they could not afford in the cultural context of their neighborhoods. One white boy talked with some feeling of his relief at not having to deal at Adams with the daily fights which dominated the life of the upper grades in his school in a poor white neighborhood.

Few staff members seemed to be aware of this quality in the children as a distinctive one. Only two mentioned it explicitly. The assistant principal--with his quasi-outsider's perspective--spontaneously mentioned a childlike quality in the students as he described their play on the playground in contrast to that he had seen at other junior highs (in poor white and black neighborhoods):

> Another thing that's really distinctive about this school is the way kids play on rec. . . You'll see 70% of the kids really playing like kids. And a few of them standing and talking, but not really talking, more sociable like. You know, goofing around. Which is in super contrast to what you'd see on playgrounds at junior highs and even other middle schools. Where kids [are] leaning against the fence, and try to get away with stuff. And try to smoke or try to leave the playground, all that kind of thing.
>
> So I think that this school although it really ... gives kids responsibilities like going down to the central library and the [athletic club gymnasium]-- it also allows them to be kids. And to be goofy.

Without having to wonder if they're too old to act like that. To have that much fun.

... And I know that these very same kids can cope and survive in their neighborhoods well. And when we get them we have an orientation, and we kind of have to shake them out of that. But then I think they really relax when they are here.

He saw the childlike qualities of the children as benefits of the school in contrast to the alienated hip quality of children in the schools to which he was used. The only other staff member to comment on the students' remaining in younger stages, had quite a different context for contrast, an open education middle school which enrolled pupils on a basis similar to Adams's. She was more negative in her assessment. In contrast to the students in the open education school, Adams's students seemed to her lacking in initiative, drives, or curiosities of their own. And indeed--though a few students initiated and carried through projects on their own, most of the time Adams students expected to carry out activities suggested and designed by adults.

It seems to this observer that these two people whose proximate experience elsewhere provided perspective on the school were both accurate in their descriptions, though they differed in their evaluations. Adams developed a distinctive ambience as a school. The staff spent little time discussing or thinking about discipline and the maintenance of order, because they maintained order so well.[19] And they did so with a tender personal embrace which supported children's sense of worth and developed their skills, but which kept them still children. The school did very little to encourage independent thought or skeptical questioning. It did not raise social issues, even the proximate ones of economic and cultural differences among the children themselves. Like a loving patriarchal family, it issued directions from the top down, from principal to teacher and from teacher to student. As a consequence it reaped benefits of warmth and acceptance, and it paid the cost of unreflective acceptance of things as they are and innocent ignorance of the turbulent but fascinating world from which the children came and to which they would return.[20]

Adams's importance for students of the educational scene lies partly in its combination not only of children of different races, but of children of different class backgrounds. Many studies have found that the class background of a student body is correlated with achievement, but more recently scattered studies are also exploring the effect of parents' social class on the goals and interactional styles of adults within the school. This literature suggests that schools do adjust to the expectations of parents (Gracey, 1972; Jeffe, 1977) sometimes against the wishes of the staff. In other cases schools may be tailored to the perceived desires of parents or to

teachers' own expectations of children's future roles in life based upon the roles of their parents (Swidler, 1976; Wilcox, forthcoming).[21] These studies suggest that upper status parents and children are more likely to want work which allows children to share in goal setting and which gives them experience in oral presentations and in developing and defending individual interests and arguments. Working class parents are more likely to prefer goals which stress basic skills and written work which follows an externally set curriculum and encourages the child to accept it more or less uncritically.

It is not surprising in this light that some of the upper middle class students, perhaps even more their parents, were restless with the dominance of seatwork in Adams's academic classes. Some of the teachers who were especially interested in these students were similarly restless with it.[22] This restlessmess was expressed in the withdrawal of a few children from the school and in the presence of decreasing numbers of upper middle class children in succeeding entering classes.[23] The patterns of the school were more congenial to lower middle class and working class parents and their children, who eagerly replaced the upper middle class children in classes entering in later years.

Some of the same teachers, children, and parents were unhappy with Adams's muting of competition. The definition of appropriate curriculum, the report card, and the honor roll all bolstered the morale of hardworking students whose skills were below grade level by removing a single standard of success. But they simultaneously decreased the rewards available to the capable student who worked above grade level. If an emphasis on seatwork prevented poor students from facing public embarrassment, it prevented good students from reaping as much public praise as they would with oral work. And if the honor roll was accessible to industrious but less skilled children, it became less of an honor for children who were skilled as well as industrious. Several teachers were seriously concerned that the lack of public reward for objectively outstanding work was lessening the commitment of effort of the more able students. This lack of public, competitive reward may have influenced an exodus of the most able students. The younger classes had fewer students working significantly above grade level. Once more, Adams's success was bought at a price.

CONCLUSIONS: LESSONS FROM THE ADAMS EXPERIENCE

Adams Avenue School is a magnet school designed to offer something which other schools do not as a reward for the trouble that parents and children take in traveling out of their neighborhoods to reach it. Adams's formal special offering is the distinctive IGE model, as well as its desegregated and diverse student body and its physical access to the resources of the

downtown area. However, the IGE model in all its detail is fairly complex; most parents require an explanation and are content to accept what Adams does as representative of IGE--unless it conflicts with their experience in one of Heartland's IGE elementary schools.

Consequently, the fact that Adams does not precisely follow the IGE model as conceived by educational planners is not very important for its relations with parents. Parents judge the school on whether their children seem to go happily to school and to make visible academic progress in terms the parent can understand. I have asked about Adams's life in terms close to the common sense criteria of parents, test scores (i.e. academic progress researchers can measure), order and personal relationships, and interracial relationships. Measured by these yardsticks, Adams is a successful school. Its continued attractiveness to parents who form a waiting list is one measure of that fact. However, I have suggested it does not create academic progress in terms as compatible to upper middle class parents, and parents of high ability children, as to lower middle and working class parents and children with average and below average achievement. It is, in other words, developing a distinctive competence even though it is not one necessarily defined by its formal specialty.

Adams's successful attraction of students despite a somewhat loose relationship to its formal specialty expresses the loose "coupling" (Weick, 1976) between the detailed reality of daily life in schools and their formal characteristics. There is a long tradition in the organizational study of schools, stretching all the way back to Waller (1932), which has recognized and studied the variable, negotiated character of reality from classroom to classroom in a single school and from school to school in a single system. (See for example, Lortie, 1975; Bidwell, 1965; Corwin, 1976; Meyer and Rowan, 1978; Weick, 1976). This tradition has not been brought together with the school effects literature, where authors of large quantitative studies have found that formal characteristics of schools aside from recruitment of students do not predict their effects on children.[24] But if the students of organizations are right that schools with similar formal characteristics may differ considerably in the subtler quality of their life, then it is hardly surprising that measures of formal characteristics are not highly correlated with outcomes.

We have had many calls for ethnographic studies of schools which can lead us to more systematic understandings of these subtler characteristics which combine to make the distinctive character of classrooms and of schools. The present study of Adams is just such an effort. And perhaps for the reader it will be of most use in suggesting that some crucial variables which combine to determine Adams's character may be worth investigating in other contexts.

Adams is shaped by its physical location. Its small size and its architecture throw students and teachers into intimate contact with each other and put each in contact with peers. But close contact can breed animosity. Adams's downtown location and citywide recruitment help to prevent such an outcome. Individuals meet as such, not as representatives of friendship, cliques, or neighborhood groups which move to the school already formed. There is not a group to which each student owes allegiance to supervise and control his activities. The principal's emphasis upon individuals and her de-emphasis upon race and social background supports the highly personal character of relationships.

The recruitment of students creates a student mix which affects the school deeply. Combined with an emphasis upon thorough going desegregation and the IGE emphasis upon skills it nearly mandates an activity structure which makes performance private and noncompetitive. But this activity structure, centered as it is around solitary written work, is uncongenial to upper middle class and highly able students. It therefore in turn has shaped the student mix, making it consist mostly of lower middle and working class students and of average and below average achievers. These students are more at home with the continuing activity structure which was evolved to meet a greater diversity than now exists at least in the younger grades.

The history of the school affected it in several important ways. A faculty used to an inner city all black clientele does not feel a loss of status, but rather a gain, in working with Adams's diversity. On the other hand, the sudden change of both population and mode and the public attention and administrative pressure which attended it, have left the teachers feeling somewhat cautious and suspicious of both outsiders and superiors. It has made relations between the principal and the teachers tense and distant. The teachers are both outwardly compliant with administrative directives and resentful of them.

At the same time the faculty culture works to encourage friendly and supportive relations between teachers and students. Together with the characteristics of the school's physical location and the influence of the principals this faculty culture calls out a co-operative and friendly collective response in children which tends to re-enforce the faculty's cultural definitions of the situation and so to create a self-reenforcing cycle of constructive teacher-student interaction.

The principal plays an important part in setting the goals and tone of the school. Despite the faculty's restlessness with her mode of dealing with them, they were almost all convinced of her genuine concern for the welfare of children. And this concern set a model which affected the faculty culture's definitions of appropriate goals and interaction. Also because the principal was a symbol of the school for the students, her behavior set much of the tone of the school as they experienced

it. With an assistant principal whose strengths were complementary to hers, the school enjoyed the effects of an administrative team which was stronger than the sum of its parts.

Finally, as a result of these many influences, Adams developed a set of implicit cultural expectations for students. These reflected the whole character of its structure and the cultural definitions and behaviors of adults. Students were expected to accept the school and one another in a positive light, without a great deal of inquiry into what lay beyond surface appearances. Students were not encouraged to take initiative to invent their own projects or develop idiosyncratic interests. Nor were they expected to explore the diverse perspectives their peers might bring to the school. The skill oriented curriculum and the lack of classroom interaction helped to keep these differences submerged. Kindliness and an accent on similarities resulted. Curiosity, independent inquirey, and an exploration of differences, while not attacked, were not nurtured.

NOTES

1. All proper names used in this report are pseudonyms.

2. In the 1979-80 year the guidelines were changed to 25% to 60% blacks.

3. While the plan formally allows voluntary choice to all children in the system, in practice most of the children bussed out of their neighborhoods are black children traveling to ordinary schools in white neighborhoods where falling birth-rates have left empty seats. While they have the right to choose among an array of white neighborhood schools, their own are often closed altogether, transformed into citywide magnets, or radically reduced in enrollment; so that attendance at a school within walking distance is not an open option for them.

4. At least some faculty were probably especially uneasy with the principal's hierarchical style because she was a woman. In social conversations, her facial expressions, tones and body language express a traditionally feminine readiness to give ground, in a way which contrasts with her exercise of unyielding direction in formal contacts with the faculty. The discrepancy makes that direction seem more arbitrary than it might were her voice a bass and her manner consistently brusquely efficient. In addition, she is black wielding authority over a majority white faculty, and it is possible that that fact also made her directions seem more harsh. However, it is most important that she was given accountability for seeing that the teachers did in fact do what they thought was an impossible task, and that she chose the path of simple and direct insistence that they do it.

5. Their acceptance of them was highlighted by the round eyed horror in which one new teacher with experience only in higher income areas and in elementary schools greeted these accounts.

6. Black teachers were more likely to mention such difficulties than were white ones. That difference could be a result of their greater alertness to such problems, or of a greater willingness of students of either race to express hostilities when supervised by a black adult than by a white one.

7. The sample should have included eighteen students. The addresses and telephone numbers of parents of two low ability sixth graders did not allow me to reach them for permission to interview the children; so these two spots in the sample were empty.

8. Their reasons for the choice differed. Some of both races simply found a diverse environment more interesting, you

learn more, they said. But some of the white children said it was a matter of fairness that black children go to the same (presumable superior) schools they did. And some black children said they were going to have to live in a society with whites and they may as well get started learning how to get along with them.

9. Teachers did not mention the school's multi-unit design when asked about IGE because Williams Annex, like several other schools in the city, had a multi-unit design without being IGE. They therefore separated that element from IGE, as it had been separated in the experience of those teachers who remained from Williams Annex.

10. During the year of the study, one unit of teachers did sort the students into four groupings by ability for their four academic classes. However, most of them still contained a wide enough range of ability so that some of the statements made for the school as a whole apply to that group as well. That unit was the most positive in its attitude toward the children and thus their individual and collective approach may have counteracted some of the effects of a different structure. In the 1979-80 year they went back to heterogeneous grouping.

11. Some classes ranged from second to twelfth grade readers, though that wide a range characterized the group in the eighth grade the most. The seventh grade had a range from about third to eighth grade readers, and the sixth an equivalent range.

12. James Herndon describes the same reaction among a group of his students who could not read (Herndon, 1969).

13. In my earlier work, I fournd in two socially and racially diverse academically tracked junior high schools, that low ability students pushed teachers to use large amounts of seat work, while high ability ones pushed them to use more whole class discussion. In the low ability classes seatwork cut down the strains on the students resulting from their poor performance in the ways just mentioned. Teachers found that classes at these levels were more orderly and task oriented with written seatwork--even though the teacher might dislike it as a pedagogical tool. High ability classes, on the other hand, demanded the right to express their thoughts and ask questions even of teachers who found those activities not useful for their pedagogical ends (Metz, 1978).

14. It is important also to remember that the Adams faculty <u>did</u> know their students unusually well because of several of the structural characteristics of the school already discussed.

15. I asked two teachers when I returned to give the teachers a report on my findings whether they were aware of participating in this pattern. They were not.

16. It is important that the interviewer was white, a fact which might have led black children at least to be more reticent about such statements.

17. I heard one long discussion of a Native American child which would have benefited from such an interpretation.

18. Or at least she did not do so publicly. When I followed her through a day, she only lightly punished a group of girls who had refused a teacher's assignment of tasks in cleaning up one of the special interest rooms. They had been assigned to clean the floor, one of the heavier tasks. All were black, and the teacher white. The principal thought the teacher insensitive to children's feelings in giving that job to a group that was all black.

19. I have argued elsewhere, that the maintenance of an attitude of childlike acceptance of adult direction among students is one of the most effective methods of maintaining order in a school (Metz, 1978) and I have argued that it is likely to have exactly the costs which the teacher from the open education school perceived at Adams.

20. When I returned to talk about my findings with the teachers, several expressed doubts about the effects of the school's protected atmosphere--which they saw in terms of size and perhaps a gentle, personal tone--on graduates who would find themselves in high schools of 2500 students. The eighth grade teachers said some of their students had come back and talked of their initial shock on encountering shakedowns and interracial hostilities in such schools.

21. Bowles and Gintis (1976) argue the whole public educational system is designed to create workers suited to the mundane jobs which are most common in a capitalist society. And historians such as Tyack, (1974) and Katz (1975) take similar if less sweeping positions. But these issues are broader than that addressed here.

22. It is important that this pattern also was very demanding for teachers, who thus had their own reasons to want to see it changed. They were teaching several sets of material at once, several times a day instead of teaching one set of material to one group at a time.

23. It is difficult to know how important the activity structures of the school were to the decreasing numbers of upper middle class children, because a new middle school for the "gifted and talented" with broad guidelines for admission and a growing enrollment drew heavily from the pool of upper

middle class parents who might have chosen Adams, and in some cases had chosen it for older children.

24. The best known of these are Coleman's (1966) study and Jencks's treatment of the broader effects of schooling (1972). Rutter and his colleagues (1979) working with a smaller sample, but with longitudinal data and participant observations in twelve schools, replicated these findings regarding formal characteristics of schools, but found that other characteristics, which require observation for measurement, do differentiate schools which have different effects on measures of both achievement and behavior among students. Brookover and his colleagues (1979) found correlations between patterns of attitudes in faculties and students' achievement.

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